



Support Groups Making a Difference in Women's Lives: Baby Aisha's Story



Fatimah, Baby Aisha, and Nuru

Fatimah is the mother of a six and half month old girl, Aisha. She lives with her family in Nasarawa village, Rimizayam, Toro Local Government Area (LGA) in Bauchi state, located in Northern Nigeria. Shortly after

her baby was born, Fatimah joined a USAID-funded, SPRING-sponsored Community Infant and Young Child Feeding (C-IYCF) support group. Here, Fatimah learned about the importance of exclusive breastfeeding.

As part of SPRING's work in Nigeria, the project aims to reduce maternal and child undernutrition and improve HIV-free survival of infants and young children. In particular, SPRING/Nigeria is contributing to improved nutrition care practices and access to quality services

through the roll out of the Nigeria Community and Facility IYCF Packages.

The support group facilitators are motivated volunteers

and the last to be trained through a series of C-IYCF trainings. The support groups are comprised primarily of 15-20 mothers and their children, but many attendees are other family members including mothers-in-law and husbands. Key messages and actions for optimal IYCF are

"I started to give water because I thought my breast milk was not enough and I did not want my baby to go hungry." Fatimah

shared and discussed within the support group, with specific emphasis on demonstration, sharing of personal experiences, and counseling.

After four weeks of exclusively breastfeeding Aisha, Fatimah feared she was not producing enough breast milk and started giving Aisha water. The support group members visited her and convinced her that her breast milk contained all the water and nutrients that her baby needed and encouraged her to continue to exclusively breastfeed.

The support group members continued their regular visits to Fatimah and her husband Nuru, who also supported his wife's choice to exclusively breastfeed.

Fatimah was thankful that her fellow support group members did not condemn her for giving her baby water and encouraged her instead. She then introduced complementary foods when the baby turned six months.



A healthy baby Aisha Nuru

Now Baby Aisha Nuru is lively, well-nourished, and healthy, and Fatimah has said she will continue to breastfeed Aisha until she is two years old.

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SPRING/Nigeria

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